

Loop 303 plans draw Grand response

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Northwest Valley residents know freeways need to be expanded to accommodate all of the traffic now and in the future.

But they also worry about noise and air quality concerns, with a proposed 10-lane highway close to their homes.

Pat Cartier, a Sun City Grand resident for eight years, worries about the impact of having a freeway close to her home and how it will effect property values.

"I know it will affect it, with the noise and pollution and air quality," she said. "It seems that every place I move, 10 to 13 years later I have to move because of progress."

Cartier joined 300 residents Wednesday who attended the Arizona Department of Transportations' Loop 303 public meeting to express their concerns, hear a presentation and view the project recommendations. Study engineers and others involved with the project were on hand to answer questions and discuss details at Willow Canyon High School in Surprise.

The Loop 303 study area improvements proposed from I-10 to Grand Avenue include widening the roadway ultimately to 10 lanes, with four general-purpose and one high occupancy vehicle lane in each direction; constructing drainage improvements; building major interchanges to connect Loop 303 to I-10 and the proposed Northern Parkway; and constructing 14 traffic interchanges at major cross-streets, including Grand Avenue.

The purpose of the meeting was to get public comment on the draft environmental asessment, said ADOT spokesman Tim Tait.

Among the potential impacts being considered were land use, water resources, flood plains, biological and visual resources air quality, noise and social concerns.

Some Sun City Grand residents complained because they were told when they bought their homes that the Loop 303 was going to be used primarily as a two-lane agricultural road.

Cliff Elkins, Surprise transportation commission member, spoke out in support of the project, citing the city's need for more transportation options.

"Surprise is starved for (transportation routes)," Elkins said. "We're 10 years too late. (Preparing for 2030) isn't the issue. We need to worry about 2009, 2010."

ADOT will compile and address comments and concerns from the public and include them in the final environmental assessment. After review, the Federal Highway Administration will decide if the project should be issued a Finding of No Significance, which would allow the project to move ahead to the final design phase.

Comments may be made until Nov. 7 via e-mail at Projectupdates@Lewin-Associates.com, fax at 480-890-0013 or by mail at Brock Barnhart, ADOT Northwest Community Outreach Team, 1146 N. Mesa Drive, Suite 102-298, Mesa, AZ 85201.